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NO. 18
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THE VAULT OF



HORROR

FEATURING



THE VAULT-KEEPER



THE CRYPT-KEEPER



THE OLD WITCH



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THE VAULT OF HORROR!

WELL, WELL, WELL... THREE HOLES IN THE GROUND AND ALL THAT SORT OF ROT! I HAVE A DILLY OF A STORY FOR YOU THIS TIME, FRIENDS, FULL OF PASSION, GRIEF... AND *HATE!* HEH, HEH! SO RELAX FOR A WHILE... *IF YOU DARE...* AND READ THE TALE I CALL...

SINK-HOLE!



SIX MONTHS, SHE REFLECTED. SIX LONG, WEARY MONTHS... THE LONGEST, MOST MISERABLE MONTHS OF HER LIFE! SHE WAS LOOKING OUT THE WINDOW OF THE RAMSHACKLE FARMHOUSE AT A CLOUD OF DUST FAR DOWN THE ROAD, AND SHE LET HER THOUGHTS DRIFT BACK... BACK TO THE BEGINNING...



J. HINDY
CRAIG

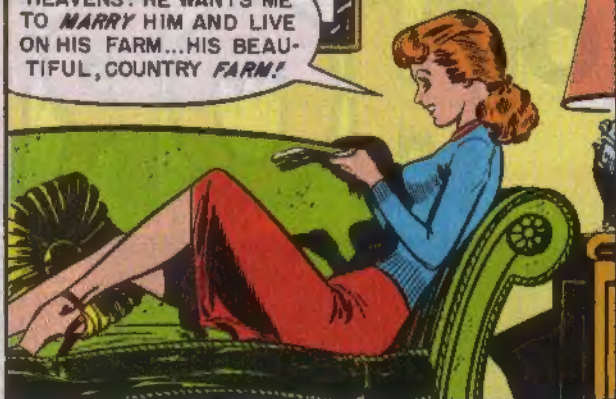
TWO YEARS AGO SHE HAD JOINED A 'LONELY HEARTS PEN-PALS CLUB' THAT WAS WHERE (BY MAIL) SHE HAD MET ALDOUS BARSTOW...

OH, HE SENT A PICTURE THIS TIME! HE'S NICE LOOKING! AND HIS LETTERS SOUND SO WARM... SO TENDER!



A YEAR OF CORRESPONDENCE HAD FOLLOWED. THE SPELL OF LONELINESS HAD BEEN BROKEN BY THE LETTERS FROM YOUNG, SYMPATHETIC ALDOUS.

HEAVENS! HE WANTS ME TO MARRY HIM AND LIVE ON HIS FARM... HIS BEAUTIFUL, COUNTRY FARM!



SHE HAD ACCEPTED HAPPILY, AND SEVERAL DAYS LATER HAD STEPPED FROM THE TRAIN... FACE TO FACE WITH ALDOUS!

YOU'RE ALDOUS? BUT THE PICTURE YOU SENT... I MEAN, IN THE PICTURE YOU... YOU LOOK...



YOUNGER? WHY, SURE! THAT SNAPSHOT WAS TAKEN MORE'N FIFTEEN YEARS AGO! I WAS GOING TO HAVE A MORE RECENT ONE MADE, BUT THEY COST MONEY!

...OF COURSE...



IT HADN'T REALLY MATTERED TO HER THEN, SHE REMEMBERED. ALTHOUGH HE WAS NO LONGER YOUNG, SHE HAD STIFLED HER MISGIVINGS AS THEY BOUNCED ALONG THE DUSTY ROAD TO THE FARM...



THE 'BEAUTIFUL COUNTRY FARM' TURNED OUT TO BE A GROUP OF DILAPIDATED BUILDINGS SQUATTING ON THE PARCHED, SUNBAKED EARTH. IT WAS A TERRIFIC SHOCK TO HER. SHE COULD HARDLY STEP FROM THE FLIVVER...



IT WASN'T ONLY THE LOOK OF THE PLACE, IT WAS THE FEEL OF IT! SHE STARED DAZEDLY AT THE DINGY, CLAPBOARD FRAME OF HER NEW HOME AND SHUDDERED. IT FELT EMPTY! IT SEEMED LIKE A PLACE WHERE NO ONE LIVED!

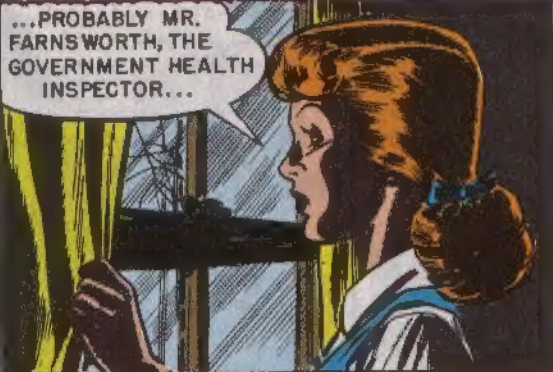
ALDOUS! IT... IT'S... LOVELY!

...PREACHER'S WAITING INSIDE! CEREMONY SHOULD NOT TAKE MORE'N A FEW MINUTES! YOU BRING THE BAGS!

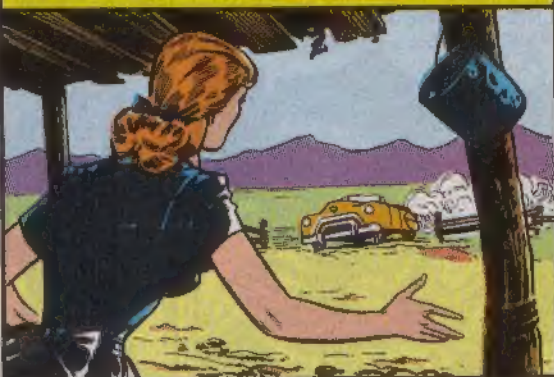


AND SO THEY HAD BEEN MARRIED! SHE HAD SENSED IT WOULDN'T WORK OUT, AND HAD BEEN RIGHT! NOW, SIX MONTHS LATER, SHE WATCHED THE SMALL DUST CLOUD MOVE CLOSER...AND TRIED TO HOLD BACK HER TEARS...

...PROBABLY MR. FARNSWORTH, THE GOVERNMENT HEALTH INSPECTOR...



...OLD FUDDY-DUDDY FARNSWORTH! SHE DISLUKED THE PRYING OLD FOOL, BUT HE WAS SOMEONE TO TALK TO! AS THE CAR DREW NEARER, SHE SAW THAT IT *WASN'T* FARNSWORTH! SHE HURRIED OUTSIDE AS THE CAR PULLED INTO THE YARD...



'MORNING! I'M **RICK HUDSON**, THE NEW HEALTH INSPECTOR! I'M TAKING OVER MR. FARNSWORTH'S JOB! ARE YOU MRS. BARSTOW?

WHY...WHY, YES! I'M MRS. BARSTOW! I'M *VERY* GLAD TO MEET YOU, MR. HUDSON. COME! I'LL... I'LL SHOW YOU AROUND...



SHE COULDN'T HAVE BEEN MORE PLEASANTLY SURPRISED! HER FACE FLUSHED...HER BODY TINGLED AT THE NEARNESS OF HIM AS HE CHECKED THE FARM'S SANITARY CONDITIONS...

I...I HOPE EVERYTHING IS ALL RIGHT, MR. HUDSON!

EVERYTHING'S FINE, MRS. BARSTOW!



SHE LIKED THIS MAN WHO HAD SUDDENLY ENLIVENED HER DRAB LIFE. SHE LIKED HIM MORE THAN WAS GOOD FOR A MARRIED GIRL...

WOULDN'T YOU RATHER CALL ME...*SHIRLEY*?

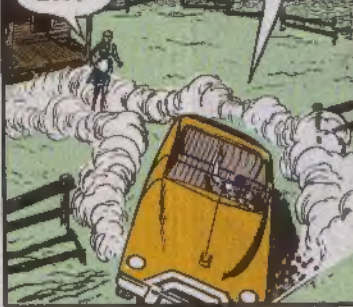
I GUESS SO! YOU CAN CALL ME RICK!



FINALLY HE HAD TO LEAVE, AND SHE FOUND HERSELF TRYING DESPERATELY TO KEEP HIM FROM GOING...

... BUT WOULDN'T YOU LIKE TO HAVE SOME COFFEE? I...

MAYBE NEXT TIME, SHIRLEY! SO LONG!



SHE STOOD THERE LONG AFTER THE CAR HAD DISAPPEARED... UNTIL THE NOISY SPUTTERINGS OF ALDOUS' TRACTOR BURST HER THOUGHTS LIKE A PIN TOUCHED TO A BALLOON...

HEAVENS! ALDOUS WILL WANT HIS LUNCH! I DIDN'T REALIZE IT WAS SO LATE!



BACK TO THE ROUTINE! THE FARM CLOSED AROUND HER AGAIN AND HER LIFE WAS AS MISERABLE AS BEFORE...

ALDOUS, I... I'D LIKE TO HAVE A NEW DRESS... PLEASE...

WHAT'S THE MATTER WITH THE ONE YOU GOT ON?



WHY... NOTHING! I JUST THOUGHT...

YOU THOUGHT WRONG! THINK I'M MADE OF MONEY? WHEN YOU NEED A DRESS, YOU'LL GET ONE! NOT BEFORE!



SHE FOUGHT TO CONTROL A FLOOD OF TEARS, BUT IT WAS IMPOSSIBLE...

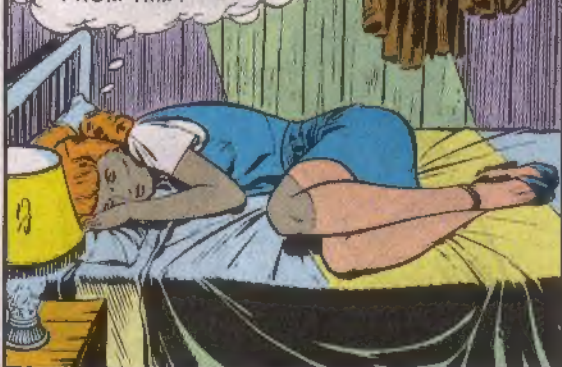
THE MEAN, STINGY, OLD SKINFINT! I HATE HIM! (SOB) HATE HIM!



HE NEVER WANTED A WIFE! HE ONLY WANTED SOMEONE TO COOK, TO SEW, TO SLAVE FOR HIM! IT WAS CHEAPER FOR HIM TO MARRY ME, THAN TO PAY A HOUSEKEEPER! (SOB!)



...I WISH I COULD GO AWAY... LEAVE THIS PLACE! BUT I CAN'T! I HAVE NO MONEY... CLOTHES! (SOB) AND WHERE COULD I GO? WHAT WOULD I DO? I'LL NEVER BE ABLE TO FREE MYSELF FROM HIM!



THE ONLY THING THAT MADE LIFE BEARABLE FOR HER IN THE MONTHS THAT FOLLOWED, WERE RICK'S VISITS. SHE WAS IN LOVE WITH HIM...

RICK... YOU'VE FINISHED INSPECTING THE FARM. CAN'T... CAN'T YOU STAY A WHILE? MUST YOU GO?

I'M SURPRISED AT YOU, SHIRLEY! WHAT WOULD ALDOUS SAY IF HE HEARD YOU TALK LIKE THAT?



ALDOUS! THAT WAS THE TROUBLE! SHE WAS CERTAIN RICK CARED FOR HER, AND THAT THE ONLY THING THAT KEPT HIM FROM SHOWING IT... WAS THE FACT THAT SHE WAS MARRIED!

ALDOUS! HOW I DETEST HIM! HE'S RUINED MY LIFE! I WISH HE'D DIE!



AT THAT MOMENT ALDOUS CAME IN FROM THE FIELDS...

OH!... NEARLY GOT MYSELF KILLED! THOSE DANGED SINK HOLES!

? SINK HOLES? WHAT'S A SINK HOLE?



THEY'RE CAUSED BY UNDER-GROUND RIVERS! THE RIVER KEEPS EATIN' AWAY THE SOIL UNTIL THE TOP GROUND JUST CAVES IN!

OH!



...I WAS DRIVIN' THE TRACTOR CROSS THE FIELD TO THE HOUSE WHEN THE GROUND JUST OPENED UP NOT TEN FEET IN FRONT OF ME!... STOPPED JUST IN TIME!

OH...



DANGED SINK HOLES! PRACTICALLY BOTTOMLESS! IF I'D FALLEN IN THERE, YOU'D NEVER HAVE FOUND ME!

OH?



THE ENTIRE PLAN STRUCK HER WITH SHOCKING FORCE! HERE WAS HER ONE AND ONLY CHANCE FOR FREEDOM... FOR HAPPINESS! AND SHE WAS IN NO MOOD TO LET IT SLIP BY...

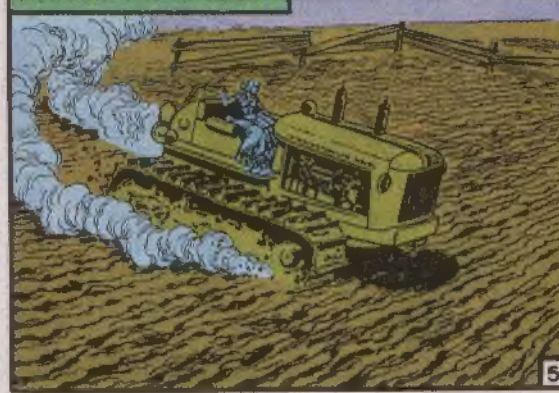


SHE DRAGGED THE UNCONSCIOUS ALDOUS FROM THE HOUSE... AND WITH GREAT EFFORT, LIFTED HIM ONTO THE TRACTOR. OVERHEAD, THE DARK SKY RUMBLED OMINOUSLY AS IF IN REPROACH...

HAVE TO HURRY! HE... HE'LL WAKE UP... SOON! (GASP!)

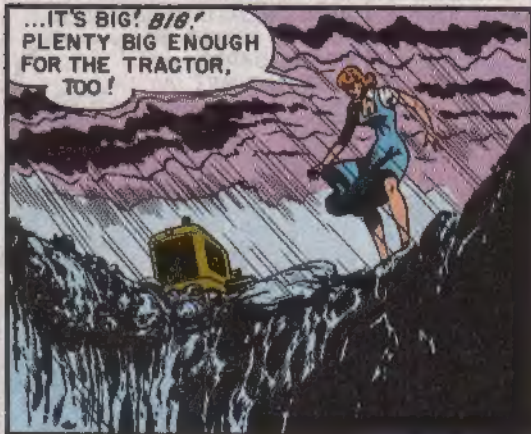


SILENTLY, SHE THANKED ALDOUS FOR HAVING MADE HER LEARN TO WORK THE TRACTOR! NOW, WHEN HER FUTURE... HER LIFE... DEPENDED ON IT, SHE WAS ABLE TO SEND THE MACHINE LURCHING ACROSS THE FIELDS...

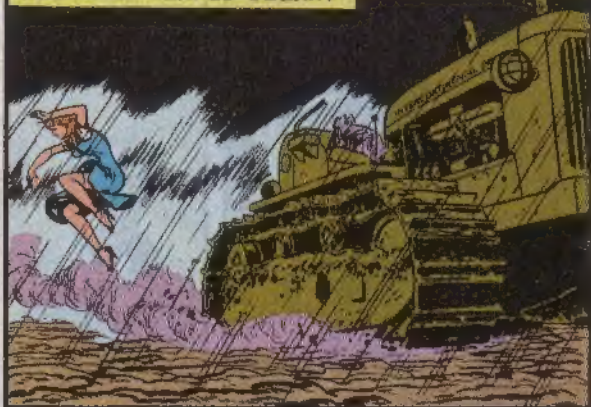


DROPLETS OF RAIN PLUNGED FROM THE SKY INTO THE EARTH! THE WIND ROSE, WHIPPING HER HAIR! SHE REACHED THE SINK HOLE...

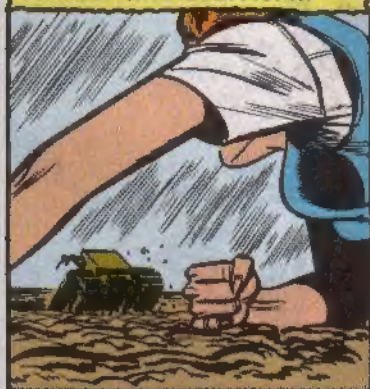
...IT'S BIG! BIG!
PLENTY BIG ENOUGH
FOR THE TRACTOR,
TOO!



SHE RACED BACK TO THE TRACTOR AND PROPPED ALDOUS IN ITS SEAT! FRANTICALLY, SHE HEADED THE TRACTOR TOWARD THE GAPING HOLE, WAITED... AND THEN LEAPED CLEAR!



SPRAWLED ON THE GROUND, SHE WATCHED SPELLBOUND AS THE TRACTOR TEETERED ON THE EDGE OF THE PIT... AND THEN TOPPLED INTO OBLIVION...



THERE WAS AN INVESTIGATION BUT IT DISCLOSED NOTHING...

YOU'LL NEVER FIND A BODY DOWN *THERE*! PROBABLY CARRIED AWAY BY THAT UNDERGROUND RIVER! NO SIGN OF THE TRACTOR, EITHER!



...AND THEN THERE WAS THE INQUEST...

...BECAUSE THE BODY OF THE DECEASED HAS NOT BEEN FOUND, THE VERDICT IS 'DEATH BY ACCIDENT, DUE TO THE CAUSES OF NATURE!'



...AND THEN SHE WAS FREE! SHE KNEW RICK WOULD SOON COME TO HER, AND SHE STROLLED ABOUT THE FARM WHILE SHE WAITED. IT WAS THE SAME UGLY, EMPTY-FEELING FARM... STILL THE PLACE WHERE, IT SEEMED, NO ONE LIVED!



RICK CAME...AND SHIRLEY RAN HAPPILY TO HIM...

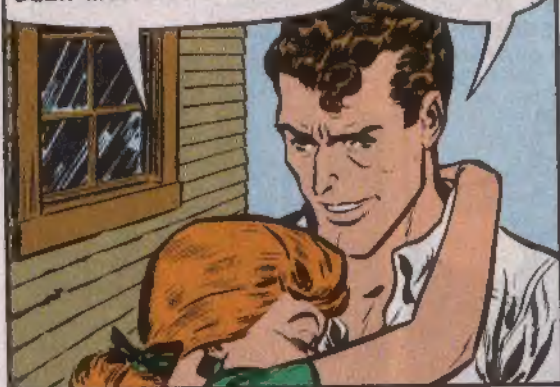
I... I HEARD ABOUT ALDOUS, SHIRLEY! I'M SORRY!

DON'T BE SORRY, RICK, BE GLAD! HE WAS MEAN... CRUEL! HE STOOD BETWEEN US, BUT NOW WE'RE FREE, RICK! FREE!



WE DON'T HAVE TO BE AFRAID TO SHOW OUR FEELINGS ANYMORE, RICK DARLING! TELL ME! TELL ME ALL THE THINGS YOU'VE BEEN WANTING TO TELL ME!

WHAT ARE YOU TALKING ABOUT? I CAME TO SAY "GOOD-BYE"!



"GOOD-BYE?"

SURE! JOE FARNSWORTH'S COMING BACK TO TAKE OVER MY JOB! I'M BEING SENT TO ANOTHER STATE!



ANOTHER STATE? YOU'LL... YOU'LL TAKE ME WITH YOU, WON'T YOU, RICK? FOR HEAVEN'S SAKE, DON'T LEAVE ME HERE! SAY YOU'LL TAKE ME WITH YOU!

ARE YOU KIDDING?



LOOK, SHIRLEY... YOU'RE A NICE KID, BUT I CAN'T TAKE YOU WITH ME! I'VE BEEN HAPPILY MARRIED FOR YEARS! I GOT A WIFE AND TWO KIDS!

RICK!

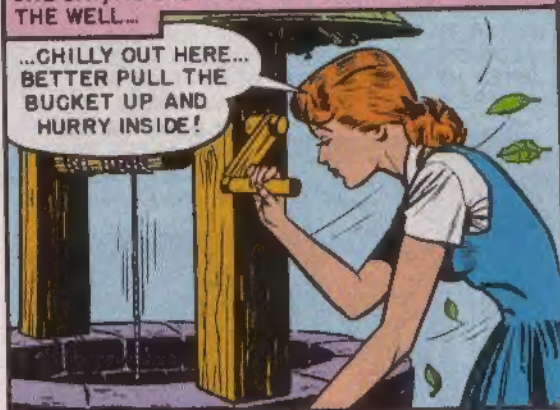


RICK...



SHE NEVER SAW OR HEARD FROM RICK AGAIN. SHE REMAINED, LASHED TO THE DESOLATE FARM, WHILE THE WEEKS PASSED INTO MONTHS... AND ONE DAY, AS SHE WENT TO DRAW WATER FROM THE WELL...

...CHILLY OUT HERE... BETTER PULL THE BUCKET UP AND HURRY INSIDE!



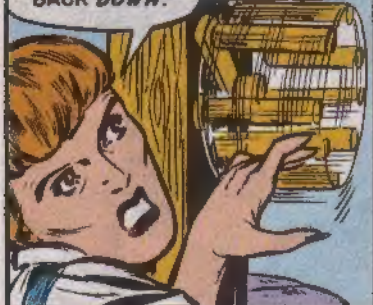
SHE WOUND THE CRANK, DRAWING THE BUCKET UPWARD! ONCE... TWICE... THEN, SUDDENLY IT STOPPED!

UUGH! WON'T COME UP ANY FURTHER! SOMETHING... SOMETHING'S HOLDING IT BACK!



SHE PITTED ALL HER STRENGTH TO THE TASK OF RAISING THE BUCKET, BUT IT WAS NO USE! THE HANDLE WAS WRENCHED FROM HER GRIP!

THE BUCKET'S GOING DOWN!
SOMETHING'S PULLING IT
BACK DOWN!



THE ROPE UNCOILED TO ITS FULL LENGTH, AND THEN IT SNAPPED TAUT! IT SWAYED AND JERKED...



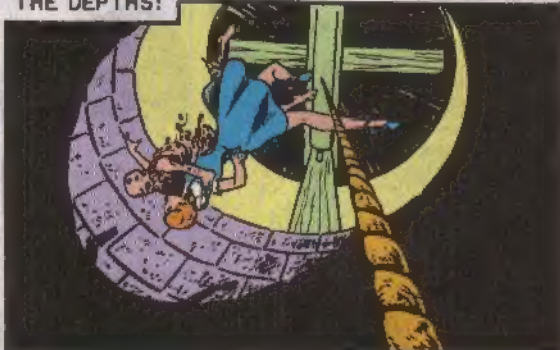
ROOTED TO THE SPOT, SHE STARED IN HORROR AS FIRST ONE HAND SLID OVER THE WELL'S WALL...AND THEN ANOTHER...



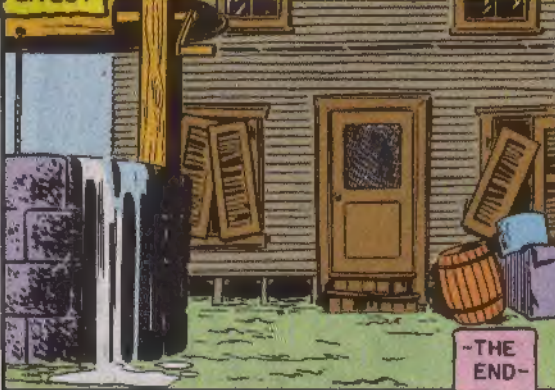
ALDOUS!



SHE WAS PETRIFIED! THE INCREDULOUSLY HORRIBLE THING GRASPED HER ARM WITH A SLIMY, MOLTED HAND AND PULLED HER CLOSE TO ITS SOAKING BODY! SHE FOUGHT HYSTERICALLY...BUT THE SLOPPING, MAGGOT-COVERED LIMBS LOCKED HER IN A DEATH GRIP...AND DRAGGED HER INTO THE DEPTHS!



THE HOLLOW ECHOES OF HER SCREAMS CEASED ABRUPTLY, AND A CLOAK OF UTTER SILENCE SEEMED TO SETTLE OVER THE EMPTY FARM! NOW IT TRULY WAS...A PLACE WHERE NO ONE LIVED!



HEH! HEH! HEH! WELL-DONE! WELL-DONE! IF SHIRLEY HADN'T GONE TO THE WELL, SHE MIGHT NOT HAVE KICKED THE BUCKET! OF COURSE, YOU REALIZE NOW THAT THE UNDERGROUND RIVER FROM THE SINK HOLE WAS THE WATER THAT FED THE WELL! HEH! I'LL BET ALDOUS EXPERIENCED A *SINKING* FEELING WHEN HE WENT TO HIS DEATH! OH, WELL... AS THE SAYING GOES, "HOW YA GONNA KEEP

'EM DOWN ON THE FARM AFTER THEY'VE SEEN DEAD ALDOUS?"
HEH! HEH! HEH!



THE CRYPT OF TERROR

H-M-M-PH! IS THAT *CHILD'S FAIRY TALE* THE *VAULT-KEEPER* JUST TOLD YOU SUPPOSED TO BE A *HORROR* STORY? *BAH!* I'LL BET YOU DIDN'T BAT AN EYELASH! NOW, IT'S *MY* TURN! YES, IT'S *ME* AGAIN! THE *CRYPT-KEEPER!* I'VE LOOKED THROUGH MY COLLECTION OF TERROR-TALES HERE IN MY CRYPT, AND I'VE COME UP WITH A HUM-DINGER! THIS YARN WILL ABSOLUTELY SEND CHILLS AND SHIVERS FROM THE TIPS OF YOUR CROOKED TOES TO THE ENDS OF THE HAIRS ON YOUR UNKEMPT HEAD! IF THE BLOOD DOESN'T FREEZE IN YOUR VEINS FROM *THIS* SPINE-TINGLER, THEN YOU'RE SITTING ON RED-HOT BRIMSTONE! I CALL THIS CRAWLY NARRATIVE...

LEND ME A HAND!



IT BEGAN IN THE CLEAN, WHITE OPERATING ROOM OF THE COUNTY HOSPITAL! DOCTOR HAROLD JOHNSTONE, HIS BROW WET WITH PERSPIRATION, STEPPED BACK FROM THE SHEETED, PROSTRATE FORM ON THE OPERATING TABLE AND REMOVED HIS MASK! HIS WHITE-COATED ASSISTANT GRASPED HIS RUBBER-GLOVED HAND...

CONGRATULATIONS, DR. JOHNSTONE! THE MOST AMAZING SURGICAL OPERATION I'VE EVER WITNESSED!

THANK YOU, DR. BROWN, FOR YOUR INVALUABLE AID!



DOCTOR JOHNSTONE TURNED, AND WITH HEAVY STEPS, MOVED THROUGH THE SWINGING DOORS OUT OF THE OPERATING ROOM! THE SMALL GROUP OF NURSES AND DOCTORS WATCHED HIM GO...

HE IS DEFINITELY THE GREATEST SURGEON ALIVE TODAY!



DOCTOR JOHNSTONE ENTERED ANOTHER WHITE, SPARKLING ROOM! THIS ONE WAS LINED WITH SINKS AND LOCKERS! HE REMOVED HIS GLOVES AND WASHED... THEN,



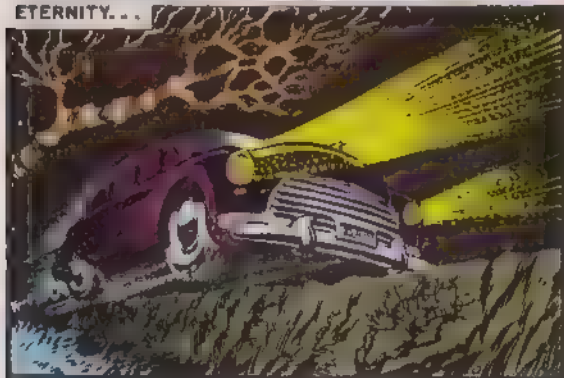
TIRED... SO TIRED! FOUR HOURS AT THE OPERATING TABLE! I'M EXHAUSTED!

DOWN THE IMPOSING MARBLE STEPS OF THE HUGE HOSPITAL TO A CAR PARKED AT THE CURB, DOCTOR JOHNSTONE TRUDGED WEARILY...

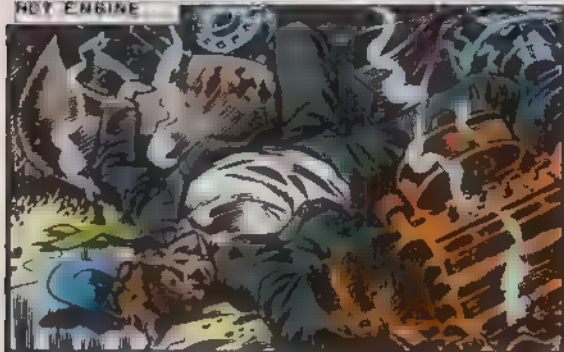


... GOT TO GET SOME SLEEP! TOO MUCH FOR ME... NIGHT AFTER NIGHT...

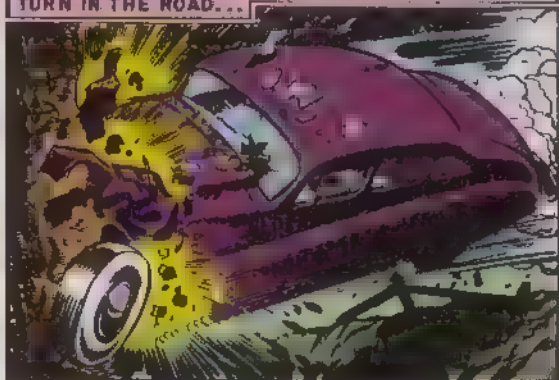
THE HEADLIGHTS OF THE HURTLING AUTOMOBILE REACHED INTO THE DARKNESS OF THE ROAD BEFORE IT LIKE TWO GHOSTLY FINGERS POINTING INTO ETERNITY...



THE STILLNESS OF THE DESERTED ROAD WAS SHATTERED BY THE IMPACT OF TWO TONS OF METAL, GLASS, AND HUMAN FLESH! THEN THE DARKNESS CLOSED IN ON THE WRECKAGE OF A ONCE SLEEK AUTOMOBILE! THE DOCTOR LAY UNCONSCIOUS, HIS RIGHT HAND PINNED BENEATH THE SEVEN-HUNDRED POUND RED-HOT ENGINE



DR. JOHNSTONE SAT BEHIND THE WHEEL! HIS EYELIDS WERE HEAVY WITH LACK OF SLEEP! FOR A MOMENT, THEY BLINKED CLOSED! ONE FLEETING MOMENT... YET LONG ENOUGH FOR THE DOCTOR TO MISS THE TURN IN THE ROAD...



WHEN DOCTOR JOHNSTONE OPENED HIS EYES, HE GAZED AT A FAMILIAR SIGHT... THE SPARKLING WHITE WALLS OF A HOSPITAL ROOM! HE LOOKED ABOUT! HIS HEAD CLEARED...



I REMEMBER, NOW! THE CRASH! I MUST HAVE FALLEN ASLEEP AT THE WHEEL! MY HAND... IT PAINS SO...

"RING FOR THE NURSE IF YOU WANT SOMETHING" HE HAD OFTEN TOLD HIS PATIENTS! HE LOOKED FOR THE SWITCH! IT LAY ABOVE HIS HEAD! HE'D HAVE TO REACH FOR IT WITH HIS RIGHT HAND... THE HAND THAT PAINED HIM SO...



THE BANDAGES COVERED HIS FOREARM FROM HIS ELBOW DOWN! BUT THE HAND...THE HAND WAS GONE...



THEY QUIETED DOCTOR JOHNSTONE! THEY TOLD HIM THAT HIS HAND HAD BEEN MANGLED AND BURNED! THAT WHEN THEY BROUGHT HIM TO THE HOSPITAL, AMPUTATION WAS THE ONLY RECOURSE! THEY GAVE HIM SEDATIVES... TO MAKE HIM SLEEP



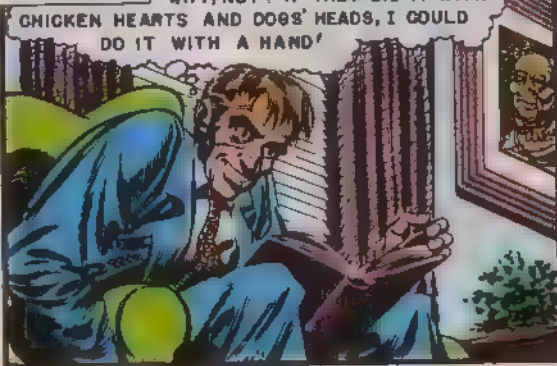
THE DAYS WENT BY, AND THE DOCTOR BECAME SULLEN AND MOROSE! HE BROODED...SPOKE TO NO ONE...



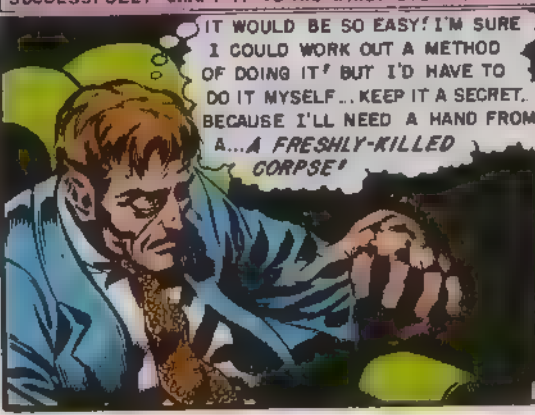
... AND THEN THEY LET HIM GO HOME! THERE WAS NOTHING MORE TO BE DONE FOR HIM! THE WRIST WOULD HEAL! BUT THE MIND... AH, THE MIND WAS A DIFFERENT MATTER! HEH, HEH! HOW WOULD YOU FEEL IF YOU WERE IN DOCTOR JOHNSTONE'S SHOES, EH?



THEN, ONE DAY, ABOUT THREE MONTHS AFTER THE ACCIDENT, DOCTOR JOHNSTONE WAS READING A MEDICAL JOURNAL... SOMETHING ABOUT KEEPING TISSUE ALIVE BY CHEMICAL AND MECHANICAL APPARATUS... WHEN IT CAME TO HIM! AN ANSWER! A WAY OUT - WHY, NOT? IF THEY DID IT WITH CHICKEN HEARTS AND DOGS' HEADS, I COULD DO IT WITH A HAND!



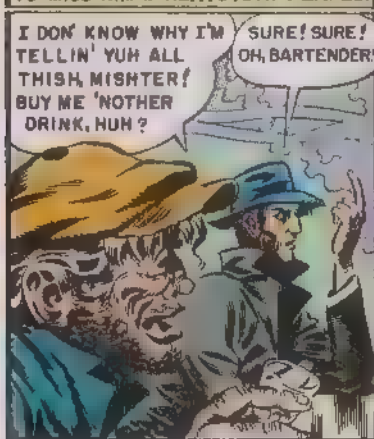
IT WAS SIMPLE! HE'D GET A HAND... SOMEWHERE... SOMEHOW! HE'D KEEP IT ALIVE UNTIL HE COULD SUCCESSFULLY GRAFT IT TO HIS WRIST STUMP...



THE EQUIPMENT WAS ASSEMBLED! PLASMA... AIR PUMPS... GLUCOSE FOR CELL NUTRITION... PLASTIC TUBING TO ACT AS VEINS AND ARTERIES... EVERYTHING WAS READY! EVERYTHING EXCEPT...



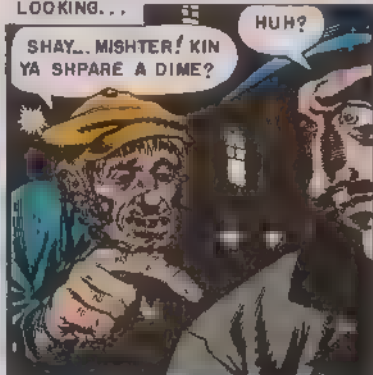
AT LAST DOCTOR JOHNSTONE HAD FOUND HIS VICTIM! A DOWN-AND-OUTER! A CHRONIC ALCOHOLIC WITH NO FAMILY... NO FRIENDS... NO ONE TO MISS HIM IF HE... **DISAPPEARED!**



CLOSE TO MIDNIGHT, TWO SHADOWY FIGURES STAGGERED FROM A BAR! THEN, ONE COLLAPSED AND THE OTHER CARRIED HIM TO A WAITING CAR



FOR MANY NIGHTS, IF ANYONE TOOK THE CARE TO NOTICE, THE DOCTOR WAS SEEN FREQUENTING BARS, BACK ALLEYS, SKID ROW... LOOKING... LOOKING...



ONCE AT HIS HOME, THE DOCTOR CARRIED THE LIMP FORM OF HIS VICTIM DIRECTLY TO HIS LABORATORY! THE LIGHTS IN THE APPARATUS-CLUTTERED ROOM BURNED FAR INTO THE NIGHT! TOWARDS MORNING...



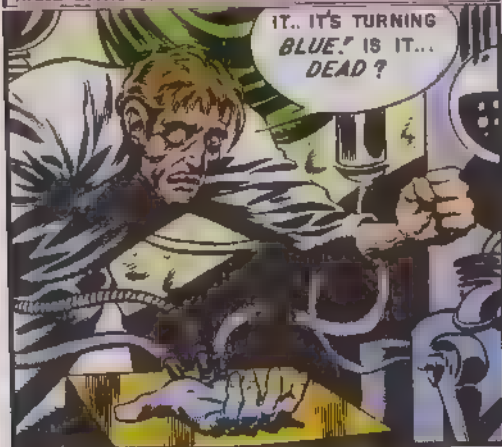
... THE SOUND OF A SPADE STRIKING THE SOFT EARTH WAS HEARD! IT ECHOED ABOUT THE DOCTOR'S GARDEN ... RESOUNDING FROM TREE TO TREE...



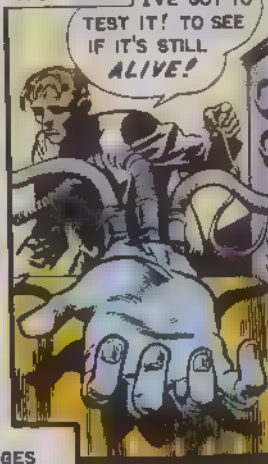
SOON THE HOLE WAS DEEP AND DARK! THE DOCTOR PUSHED THE BODY OF THE UNFORTUNATE DERELICT INTO THE YAWNING PIT AND FILLED IT UP WITH THE BLACK EARTH...



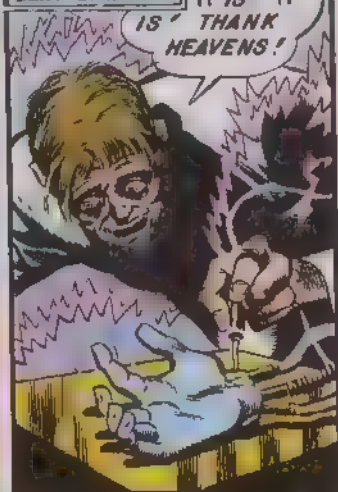
THE WORK IN THE GARDEN COMPLETED, THE DOCTOR RETURNED TO HIS LABORATORY! THE MONOTONOUS THROBBING OF AN AIR PUMP... THE GURGLING OF PLASMA COURSEING THROUGH TUBING... THE STEADY DRIP, DRIP OF GLUCOSE... WERE HEARD! DOCTOR JOHNSTONE STARED AT THE HAND LYING ON THE WHITE MARBLE SLAB...



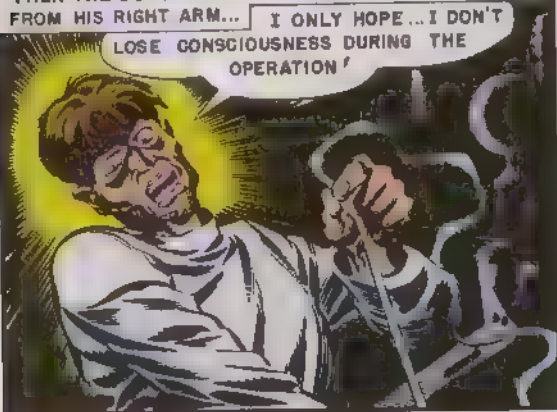
HORROR CLUTCHED AT THE DOCTOR'S POUNDING HEART! THE HAND LAY ON THE TABLE... THE TUBES ATTACHED TO ITS VEINS AND ARTERIES PULSATING WITH EACH STROKE OF THE PUMP... I'VE GOT TO TEST IT! TO SEE IF IT'S STILL ALIVE!



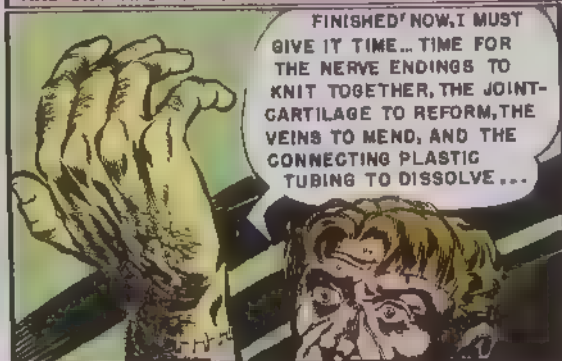
DOCTOR JOHNSTONE TOUCHED A WIRE TO A NERVE ENDING AT THE STUMP OF THE WRIST! A SMALL CHARGE OF ELECTRICITY SHOT FROM IT! THE HAND QUIVERED... A FINGER BENT UPWARD... IT IS! IT IS! THANK HEAVENS!



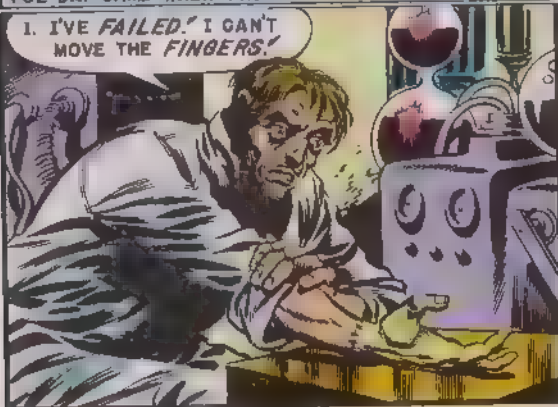
THEN THE DOCTOR BEGAN TO UNWRAP THE BANDAGES FROM HIS RIGHT ARM...



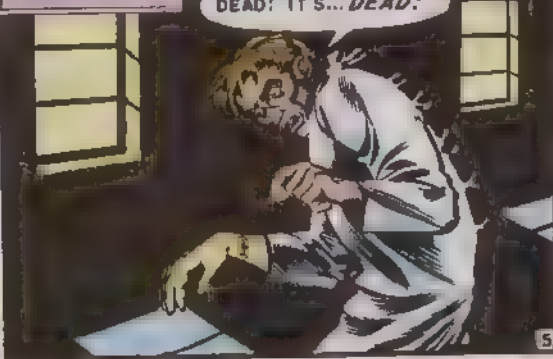
THE CLOCK ON THE LABORATORY WALL TICKED ON AND ON! AND THEN, THREE HOURS LATER...



THE WEEKS WENT BY! DOCTOR JOHNSTONE REMAINED INDOORS. HIS ARM IN A CAST! FINALLY THE FATEFUL DAY CAME WHEN THE CAST WAS REMOVED



SOMETHING WAS *WRONG*! SOMETHING HAD BEEN OVERLOOKED! THE HAND WAS NUMB... THERE WAS NO FEELING! THE DOCTOR TOOK A PIN AND JABBED IT! THERE WAS NO PAIN...



THE DOCTOR HURLED HIMSELF UPON THE BED AND FELL INTO AN EXHAUSTED SLEEP! THE DAY DARKENED AND NIGHT CAME ON! THE DEAD HAND LAY AT HIS SIDE, ATTACHED TO HIS ARM... LIFELESS... STILL! THEN... A FINGER MOVED! IT TWITCHED... BENT...



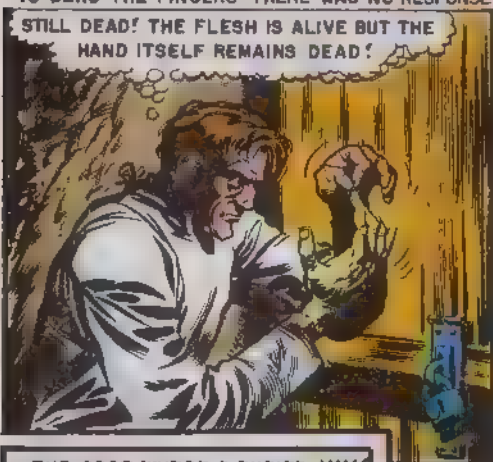
WHEN THE DOCTOR WOKE UP, HE FOUND HIMSELF TEARING AT THE LOCK TO THE TOOLROOM, TRYING TO OPEN THE DOOR...

WHA.. WHAT AM I DOING HERE? GOOD LORD, I MUST HAVE WALKED IN MY SLEEP!



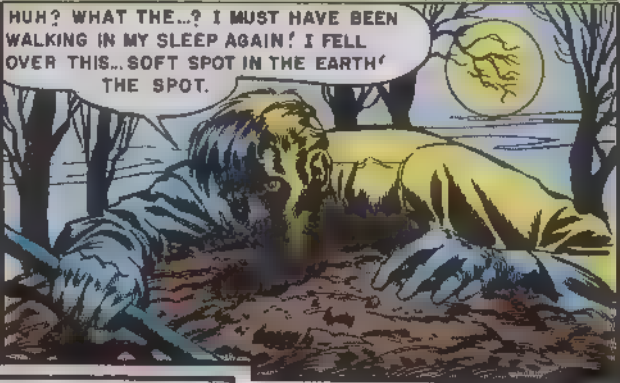
HE LIFTED THE HAND... STARING AT IT! HE TRIED TO BEND THE FINGERS! THERE WAS NO RESPONSE

STILL DEAD! THE FLESH IS ALIVE BUT THE HAND ITSELF REMAINS DEAD!



THE NEXT NIGHT, THE DOCTOR WENT TO BED AT HIS USUAL TIME! DURING THE DAY HE HAD BEEN ALMOST TEMPTED TO REMOVE THE LIFELESS HAND FROM HIS ARM.. BUT HAD DECIDED TO WAIT, TO SEE! HIS SLEEP WAS TROUBLED! HE DREAMED OF WALKING IN BLACKNESS .. CARRYING A STICK! HE WAS AWAKENED SUDDENLY BY...

HUH? WHAT THE...? I MUST HAVE BEEN WALKING IN MY SLEEP AGAIN! I FELL OVER THIS... SOFT SPOT IN THE EARTH! THE SPOT.



THE SPOT WHERE I BURIED HIM!

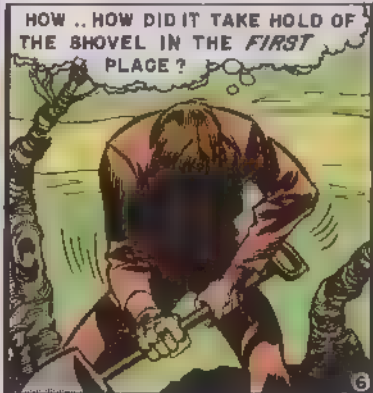


WHAT AM I DOING WITH THIS SHOVEL? AND THE HAND... THE DEAD HAND IS HOLDING IT!

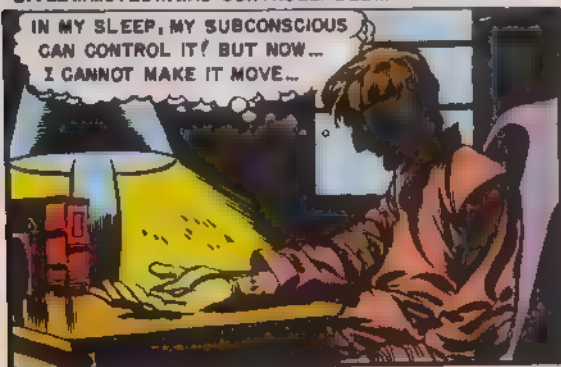


DOCTOR JOHNSTONE TRIED TO WRENCH THE SHOVEL FROM THE DEAD LIMB! BUT IT HELD IT IN A VICE-LIKE GRIP ..

HOW .. HOW DID IT TAKE HOLD OF THE SHOVEL IN THE FIRST PLACE?



THE AMAZED DOCTOR FINALLY REMOVED THE SHOVEL FROM THE HAND, LOCKED IT IN THE TOOLROOM, AND RETURNED TO THE HOUSE! THERE WAS NO SLEEP FOR HIM THE REST OF THAT NIGHT! HE WAS SURE NOW THE OPERATION WAS A SUCCESS AND THAT THE HAND LIVED... MOVED... WAS CONTROLLABLE...



DOCTOR JOHNSTONE STARED DOWN INTO THE BLACK HOLE BEFORE HIM! THERE, IN THE SLIMY WET SOIL, HE SAW IT...



THE FOLLOWING EVENING, AFTER AN EXHAUSTING DAY OF TREATING THE HAND WITH DIATHERMY TO RELAX THE MUSCLES, THE DOCTOR RETIRED EARLY! HE IMMEDIATELY DROPPED OFF INTO A NIGHTMARE OF CLAWING AT CLOSED DOORS... AND DIGGING... *DIGGING!* SUDDENLY, HE OPENED HIS EYES...



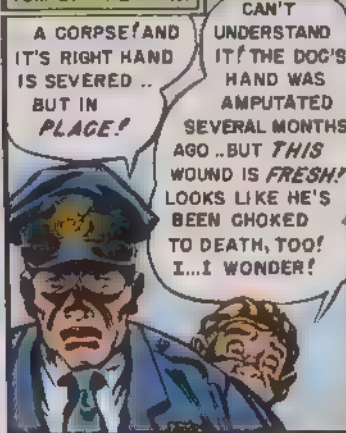
AN EXCRUCIATING PAIN WHIPPED THROUGH JOHNSTONE'S RIGHT ARM! THE HAND THE DEAD HAND



AN EAR-SPLITTING SHRIEK SHATTERED THE STILLNESS OF DOCTOR JOHNSTONE'S GARDEN! THE GULPING, WRETCHING, GAGGING GROANS OF A MAN BEING CHOKED TO DEATH WERE HEARD



THEY FOUND THE DOCTOR LYING BY THE PIT! HE WAS DEAD! BLOOD TRICKLED FROM HIS RAW WRIST-STUMP! AND DOWN AT THE BOTTOM OF THE PIT...



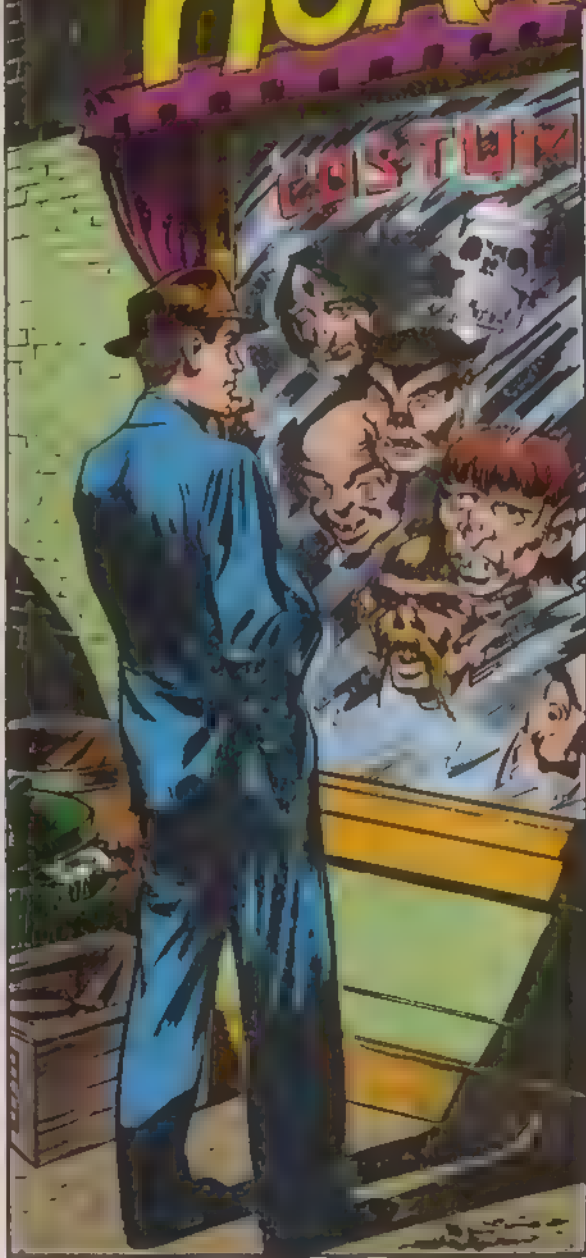
NEH, NEH! AND THAT'S MY TALE FROM THE *CRYPT* FOR THIS ISSUE, KIDDIES! LOOKS LIKE THE OLD DRUNK'S *HAND* RESENTED BEING

SEPARATED FROM ITS *BODY*, EH? IT CAME *BACK*, THOUGH, IN A *GRIPPING FINISH*... DOCTOR JOHNSTONE'S *FINISH*, THAT IS! WELL, I HOPE THIS STORY *HANDED* YOU A FEW *CHILLS*! NOW, I'LL TURN YOU BACK TO THE *VAULT-KEEPER* FOR ANOTHER *SISSY-STORY*!

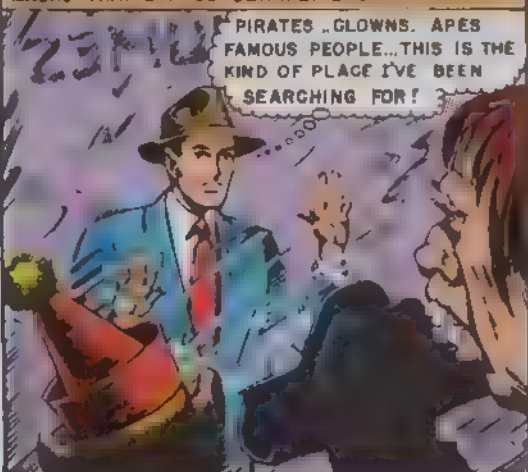


I CALL THIS CHILLING TALE...

THE MASK OF HORROR



IT WAS A SMALL COSTUME SHOP IN A DARK TWISTING STREET AT THE EDGE OF THE THEATRICAL DISTRICT. KEN ANDERS STOOD BEFORE ITS CLUTTERED WINDOW AND GAZED IN AT THE ARRAY OF DEATH LIKE MASKS THAT STARED BLANKLY BACK AT HIM.



KEN ENTERED THE GLOOMY SHOP! THE MUSTY SMELL OF CLOTHES LONG-SINCE ROTTED INTO USELESSNESS... YELLOWING NEWSPAPERS THAT COVERED FORGOTTEN ORDERS... THE ODOR OF DRYING RUBBER AND AGING PAPER-MACHE BURNED HIS NOSTRILS! THE SHOP WAS DANK AND DAMP... LONELY... LIKE A TOMB.



HE CAME FROM BEHIND A FADED CURTAIN... SMALL... WRINKLED... AN OLD MAN, BENT FROM THE SHRINKING OF A ONCE YOUNG BODY! HE SHUFFLED TOWARDS KEN...

YES? WHAT CAN I DO FOR YOU?

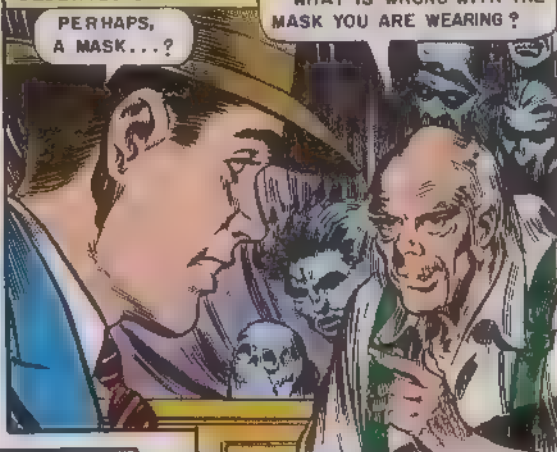
I... I'D LIKE TO BUY A COSTUME... FOR A MASQUERADE PARTY! SOMETHING... **UNIQUE!**



KEN GESTICULATED TOWARD THE WINDOW WHERE THE MASKS HUNG GRINNING EAGERLY AT AN EMPTY DARK DESERTED STREET...

PERHAPS, A MASK...?

WHAT IS WRONG WITH THE MASK YOU ARE WEARING?

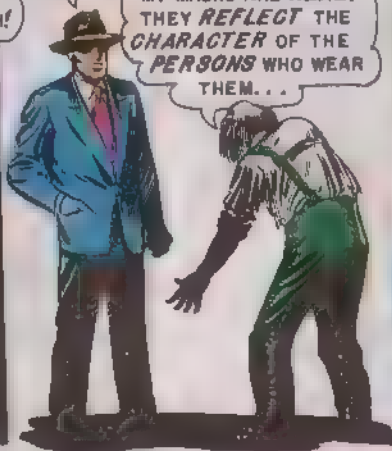


HUH?

EVERYONE WEARS A MASK! IT HIDES THE EVIL... THE GOOD... THE HATE... THE LOVE... THAT LIES BENEATH!

YEAH, SURE! ONLY...

BUT HERE... AH... HERE IN MY SHOP, THINGS ARE **DIFFERENT**. MY MASKS ARE **REAL!** THEY **REFLECT** THE **CHARACTER** OF THE **PERSONS** WHO WEAR THEM...



THEY... THEY WHAT?

ONE OF **MY** MASKS REPRESENT MORE **TRULY** THE PERSON THAT IS BENEATH THE FACE IT COVERS!



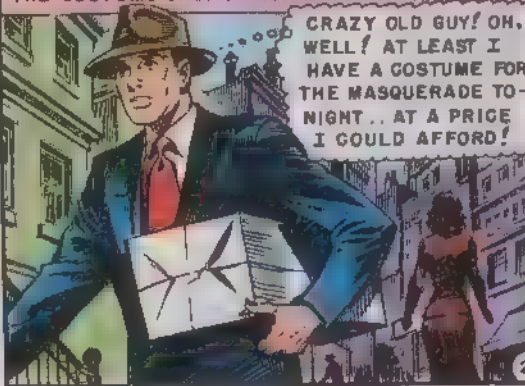
YES! I SEE! VERY INTERESTING! NOW, ABOUT THIS MASQUERADE PARTY...

HERE! TAKE THIS BOX! IT HAS A COSTUME AND A MASK INSIDE! A MASK THAT **ACTUALLY LOOKS LIKE YOU...** THE **REAL YOU!**



KEN ANDERS LEFT THE SHOP, THE PACKAGE UNDER HIS ARM! HE MOVED DOWN THE DARK TWISTING STREET! A GIRL PASSED HIM... STOPPED BEFORE THE COSTUME SHOP... THEN ENTERED.

CRAZY OLD GUY! OH, WELL! AT LEAST I HAVE A COSTUME FOR THE MASQUERADE TONIGHT... AT A PRICE I COULD AFFORD!

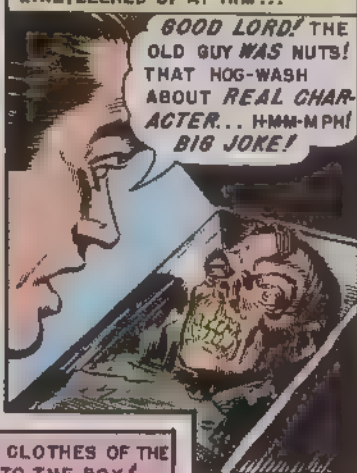


ONCE BACK AT HIS ROOM, KEN SHOWERED AND SHAVED! THEN HE CUT THE STRING THAT SECURED THE BOX, OPENED IT...

NOW LET'S SEE WHAT KIND OF A COSTUME THE OLD GUY GAVE ME ANYWAY... *WHA...?*



KEN STEPPED BACK HORRIFIED! THE ROTTING FACE OF A DECOMPOSING CORPSE, ALMOST SKULL-LIKE, LEERED UP AT HIM...



GOOD LORD! THE OLD GUY WAS NUTS! THAT HOG-WASH ABOUT REAL CHARACTER... HMM-MPH! BIG JOKE!

WHAT A *REVOLTING* COSTUME! WELL... I MIGHT AS WELL WEAR IT! IT'S TOO LATE TO TAKE IT BACK, *NOW!*



KEN DRESSED IN THE MOLDY ROTTEN CLOTHES OF THE COSTUME AND PUT THE MASK BACK INTO THE BOX! THEN HE LEFT! HE TOOK A TAXI CROSS-TOWN TO HIS FIANCEE'S HOUSE...

AGNES! YOU'RE NOT DRESSED!

I'M NOT GOING, KEN! I'VE A *TERRIBLE* HEADACHE! YOU GO ON ALONE! I WOULDN'T WANT TO SPOIL YOUR EVENING!



NONSENSE! I'LL STAY HERE WITH YOU THIS EVE...

NO! I... I... I'D RATHER BE ALONE, KEN... *PLEASE...*



KEN LEFT! THE PARTY WOULDN'T BE MUCH FUN WITHOUT AGNES! DEAREST AGNES! SOMEDAY SHE WOULD BE KEN'S WIFE! AND THEY'D GROW OLD TOGETHER... AND... *THE MASK...*

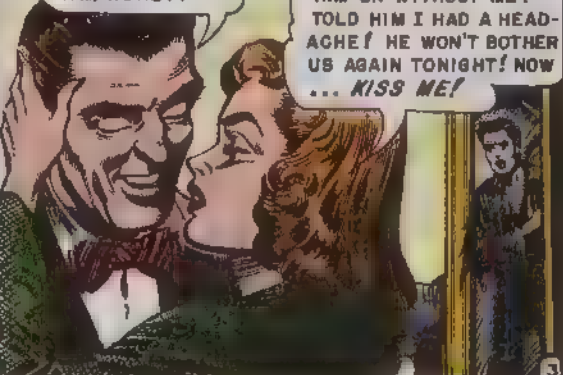
I LEFT MY MASK AT AGNES' HOUSE! I'LL HAVE TO GO BACK AND GET IT!



KEN TURNED AROUND! A CAR PULLED UP BEFORE AGNES' HOUSE! A MAN GOT OUT AND WENT INSIDE! KEN MOVED TOWARD THE DOOR... OPENED IT...

DID YOU GET *RID* OF HIM, HONEY?

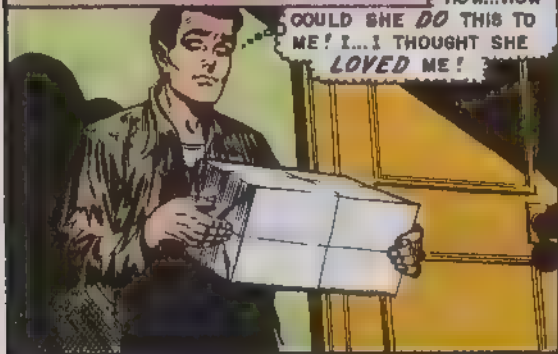
YES, THE *SAP!* I SENT HIM ON WITHOUT ME! TOLD HIM I HAD A HEADACHE! HE WON'T BOTHER US AGAIN TONIGHT! NOW... *KISS ME!*



KEN PICKED UP HIS PACKAGE AND CLOSED THE DOOR!
AGNES... AGNES AND ANOTHER MAN...

HOW...HOW

COULD SHE DO THIS TO
ME! I...I THOUGHT SHE
LOVED ME!



AND THEN HE FOUND HIMSELF STANDING BEFORE A
DOOR! FROM WITHIN, THE SOUND OF MUSIC AND REV-
ELRY DRIFTED ONTO THE DARK STREET! HE UNTIED
THE BOX AND BLIPPED ON THE MASK! THE DOOR
OPENED..

GOOD LORD!

OH..YOU GAVE ME A START!
WHAT A...A...SCARY MASK!



THE DRUNKEN PIRATE PULLED
HIM TO A FAR CORNER OF THE ROOM
WHERE A SHAPELY GIRL, HER FACE
COVERED BY THE MASK OF AN
EVIL VAMPIRE, SAT DEMURELY...

MISH VAMPIRE! LOOKA WHAT
I GOT FOR YOU!



THE GIRL LOOKED UP! THE DRUNKEN
PIRATE RAMBLED ON...

MISHTER CORPSH! MEET MISH
VAMPIRE! I'M SHURE YOU TWO
WILL BE SHO HAPPY TOGETHER...



KEN WALKED IN A DAZE! HE KEPT SEEING THEM... TO-
GETHER... KISSING... EMBRACING... AND LAUGHING...
LAUGHING AT HIM...

WE...WE WERE ENGAGED!
I...I FEEL LIKE A FOOL!



KEN MOVED AS THOUGH IN A DREAM! PEOPLE IN VARIED
COSTUMES... LAUGHING... TALKING... DANCING... DRINKING...
ALL GREW SILENT AS THEY CAUGHT SIGHT OF HIM!
BUT HE DIDN'T CARE! HE FELT LIKE HIS MASK. DEAD
... HIS LIFE ENDED! THE OLD MAN.. FUNNY... THE
OLD MAN WAS ALMOST RIGHT.

SHAY! C'MERE MISHTER CORPSH! I
GOT JUSHT THE GIRL FOR YOU!
C'MON, C'MON, HIC..

BUT, I



HE STAGGERED AWAY! THERE WAS
A MOMENT OF EMBARRASSING
SILENCE AND THEN...

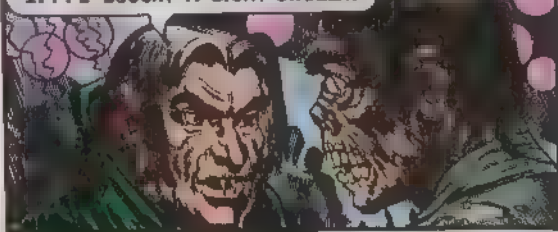
IF YOU CAN...STAND IT. YES! I'D
SHALL WE DANCE? LOVE TO!



KEN TOOK HER IN HIS ARMS! HER WARM LOVELINESS WAS COMFORTING TO HIM! TONIGHT...TONIGHT HE WOULD HAVE FUN! FORGET AGNES! OVER... **DONE WITH...**

SO DID I...

I...I'M SORRY ABOUT THE MASK!
I... I BOUGHT IT SIGHT UNSEEN!



THE GIRL! THE GIRL IN THAT DARK TWISTING STREET THAT WENT INTO THE SHOP... AFTER HE CAME OUT...

AT A LITTLE PLACE DOWNTOWN...
A COSTUME SHOP...WITH A QUEER
OLD PROPRIETOR?

YES! IS THAT
WHERE YOU
BOUGHT YOURS?



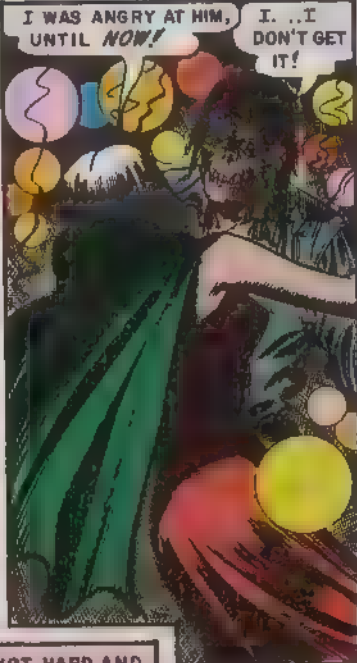
THE MUSIC...THE LAUGHING...AND
THE GIRL IN HIS ARMS...WARM...
LOVELY...TALKING TO HIM! MAKING
HIM FORGET...FORGET...

I WAS ANGRY AT HIM,
UNTIL **NOW!**

I...I
DON'T GET
IT!

DID HE TELL YOU
ABOUT HIS MASKS,
TOO? THAT THEY
TRULY REPRESENTED
THE WEARER!

YEAH! CRAZY
OLD COOT!
IT WAS A
DIRTY
TRICK!



WELL IF IT WEREN'T FOR
THESE MASKS...THESE
HORRID MASKS HE GAVE
EACH OF US, WE NEVER
WOULD HAVE MET!

THAT
THAT'S
RIGHT!



THEY LAUGHED! SHE WAS SWEET! NOT HARD AND
COLD LIKE AGNES! SHE WAS SOFT...GENTLE...

I'LL BET UNDER THAT EVIL
VAMPIRE MASK, THERE'S A
FACE AS LOVELY AND AS
CHARMING AS THE VOICE
I HEAR AND THE BODY I
SEE...

THE SAME TO
YOU . MISTER
CORPSH!



THE EVENING WENT BY, AND KEN AND HIS MYSTERIOUS
MASKED PARTNER DANCED ON...AND LAUGHED. AND
TALKED...AND FELL IN LOVE...

PLEASE, DARLING! LET'S GO OUT
INTO THE GARDEN! IT'S ALMOST
MIDNIGHT AND I... I'D LIKE TO BE
ALONE WITH YOU WHEN WE **UNMASK!**

OF COURSE,
SWEET! WE'LL
FIND A QUIET,
LONELY SPOT!



NEAR A MIRROR-LIKE LILY POOL, THEY STOOD... KEN AND THIS LOVELY CREATURE WHOM HE HAD FALLEN IN LOVE WITH...

I I DON'T CARE WHAT YOU *LOOK* LIKE, DEAREST! I'LL *WANT* YOU NO MATTER WHAT!

AND I, YOU, DARLING! IF WE'VE FALLEN IN LOVE IN SPITE OF THESE HORRID MASKS, IT *CAN'T* MAKE ANY DIFFERENCE!



WITH TREMBLING HANDS, KEN UNTIED THE EVIL, UGLY, VAMPIRE MASK FROM THE GIRL AND LIFTED IT AWAY...

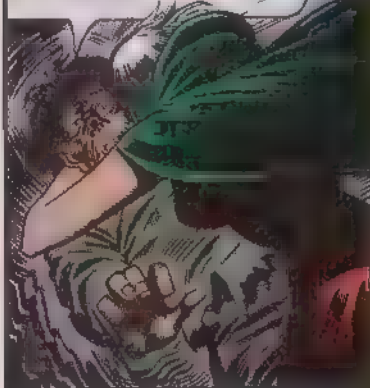
OUGH! GOOD LORD!

YES... I'LL WANT YOU... AND THIS IS AS GOOD A TIME AS ANY...



SHE SPRANG AT HIM... BURYING HER SHARP FANGS IN HIS NECK! FOR A MOMENT, KEN WAS PARALYZED WITH FEAR! THEN...

GET... AWAY... FROM... ME... GASP... YOU... GASP... HORRIBLE... FIEND...



THEY STRUGGLED! KEN'S FOOT SLIPPED FROM UNDER HIM, AND HE DROPPED TO THE GROUND! SHE WAS UPON HIM... CLAWING... SCRATCHING... TEARING! THE POOL... THE LILY POOL...

MY ONLY CHANCE



HE PUSHED HER HEAD BELOW THE SURFACE! SHE CLUTCHED AT HIS MASK, TEARING IT FROM HIS FACE! THE WATER WAS CHURNED BY THE GASPING AND STRUGGLING OF THE DROWNING GIRL...

DIE... INHUMAN MONSTER! DIE!



AND THEN THE SPLASHING AND THE CHURNING CEASED! THE VAMPIRE WAS DEAD! THE RIPPLES RAN IN CONCENTRIC CIRCLES TO THE EDGE OF THE LILLY POND! KEN GAZED DOWN AT ITS SHIMMERING WATER... AT THE GIRL LYING BELOW ITS MIRROR-LIKE SURFACE! AND THEN HE SAW IT...

OH LORD... NO... NO!



HIS OWN REFLECTION! HIS FACE... UNMASKED...



HEH, HEH! WELL, THAT'S MY TALE, KIDDIES! KEN LOOKED INTO THE LILY-POOL AND DECIDED RIGHT THEN AND THERE TO VISIT A GOOD PLASTIC SURGEON! OH WELL! HE'LL FIND OUT THAT IT'S AN

UNDERTAKER HE REALLY NEEDS! AND NOW, I'LL TURN YOU OVER TO MY FELLOW GHOULNATIC. THE OLD WITCH! BYE, NOW!



AND, IF YOU DON'T HAVE A SUBSCRIPTION YOU'LL FIND OUR ADDRESS *SOMEWHERE!*

THE WITCH'S CAULDRON!

HEE, HEE! YES, IT'S ME AGAIN! THE *OLD WITCH!* I SEE IT IS TIME ONCE MORE FOR ME TO LIGHT THE FIRE UNDER MY CAULDRON AND BREW FOR YOU ANOTHER *TALE OF TERROR!* I'M SURE YOU'LL LIKE THE TASTE OF *THIS* YARN I'VE CONCOCTED! IT'S A SPECIAL RECIPE, FILLED WITH *HORROR*, WELL GARNISHED WITH *FRIGHT*, AND TOPPED OFF WITH A *SHOCKING FINISH!* TUCK YOUR SHROUDS UP UNDER YOUR LITTLE CHINS SO THE DRIPPING *CHILLS* WON'T SOIL YOUR MUMMY WRAPPINGS, AND I'LL FEED YOU THE TALE I CALL...

DYING TO LOSE WEIGHT!

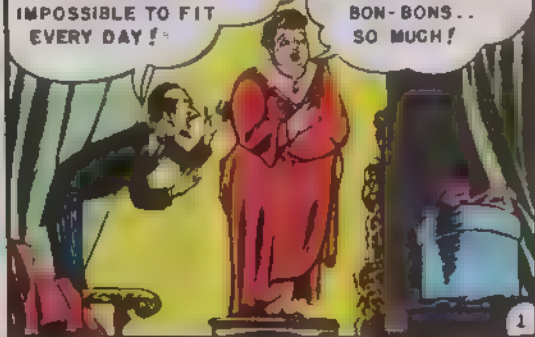
REDUCE
THE
EASY WAY



MY TALE BEGINS IN A SMALL TOWN! IT'S A NICE TOWN...WITH NICE PEOPLE...TALL NICE PEOPLE... SHORT NICE PEOPLE...SKINNY NICE PEOPLE... AND FAT NICE PEOPLE! AH, THE *FAT* NICE PEOPLE! THEY ARE THE ONES MY STORY IS ABOUT! THERE'S MRS. VAN KLEGE, THE TOWN'S RICHEST WOMAN...

MY DEAR MRS. VAN KLEGE! YOU SIMPLY MUST REDUCE! YOUR FIGURE IS GETTING MORE IMPOSSIBLE TO FIT EVERY DAY!

REALLY, PIERRE? BUT... I DO LOVE MY BON-BONS... SO MUCH!



AND THEN THERE'S TOM AIKINS, A HEN-PECKED HUSBAND IF YOU EVER SAW ONE...

LOOK AT YOU! I'M ALWAYS MENDING BUTTONS ON YOUR CLOTHES! THEY KEEP POPPING OFF! I'M ASHAMED TO BE SEEN WITH YOU ON THE STREETS! WHY DON'T YOU GO ON A DIET?

AW, LEENA! YOU KNOW I LIKE MY EATIN' MORE'N ANYTHING IN THE WORLD!



...AND SALLY BATES...EIGHTEEN AND NEVER BEEN KISSED...OR HUGGED...

ANOTHER SATURDAY NIGHT AT HOME! SALLY, HOW DO YOU EXPECT BOYS TO ASK YOU OUT IF YOU REFUSE TO WATCH YOUR FIGURE?

BUT MOTHER! I... I COULDN'T GIVE UP MY ICE CREAM FRAPPE BUNDLES WITH WHIPPED CREAM! I LOVE THEM SO!



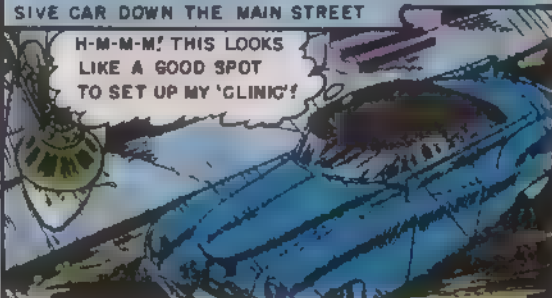
...AND POOR CHARLIE STREET...TWO-HUNDRED AND FORTY POUNDS OF BACHELOR...LIVING IN A FURNISHED ROOM...

NEVER GOES OUT WITH ALL THE NICE WOMEN BOARDIN' WITH ME! THEY WON'T LOOK AT HIM 'CAUSE HE'S SO...SO...YOU KNOW!



OH, OF COURSE THERE ARE OTHER NICE FAT PEOPLE IN THIS TOWN, BUT THESE FOUR ARE THE ONES WE ARE MOST CONCERNED ABOUT! THESE FOUR AND ONE OTHER! A HEAVY MAN WITH TWINKLING EYES WHO JUST AT THIS MOMENT IS DRIVING HIS EXPENSIVE CAR DOWN THE MAIN STREET

H-M-M-M! THIS LOOKS LIKE A GOOD SPOT TO SET UP MY 'GLINK'!



THE HEAVY MAN WITH THE TWINKLING EYES AND THE EXPENSIVE CAR PULLS UP BEFORE A LARGE BUILDING WITH A SIGN HANGING FROM IT... (AH, JUST

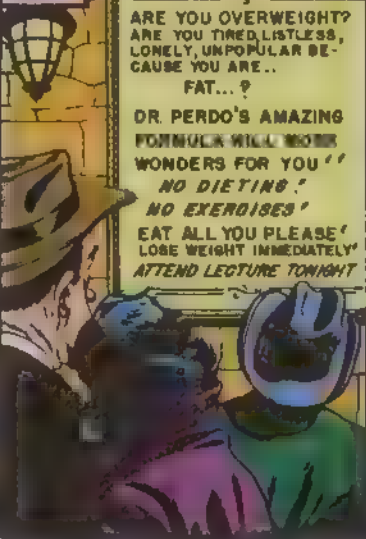
WHAT I'M LOOKING FOR! 'OFFICE SPACE FOR RENT'



A FEW DAYS LATER, LARGE POSTERS BEGIN TO APPEAR ON FENCES, BILLBOARDS, AND BRICK WALLS AROUND TOWN.

ARE YOU OVERWEIGHT?
ARE YOU TIRED, LISTLESS,
LONELY, UNPOPULAR BE-
CAUSE YOU ARE...
FAT...?

DR. PERDO'S AMAZING
FORMULA WILL WORK
WONDERS FOR YOU!
NO DIETING!
NO EXERCISES!
EAT ALL YOU PLEASE!
LOSE WEIGHT IMMEDIATELY!
ATTEND LECTURE TONIGHT



CAN IT BE TRUE? NO DIETING? NO EXERCISES? JUST DR. PERDO'S AMAZING FORMULA? ALL THE NICE FAT PEOPLE OF THE TOWN JAM THE LECTURE HALL TO HEAR DR. PERDO...

AND SO, LADIES AND GENTLEMEN, THAT IS THE STORY OF MY DISCOVERY! IN THIS TINY CAPSULE IS THE WHOLE SECRET OF MY AMAZING REDUCING PROGRAM! ...LET ME WARN YOU! THE COSTS OF MY RESEARCH WERE HIGH. THEREFORE, MY FEE FOR THIS PRECIOUS CAPSULE WILL BE HIGH!

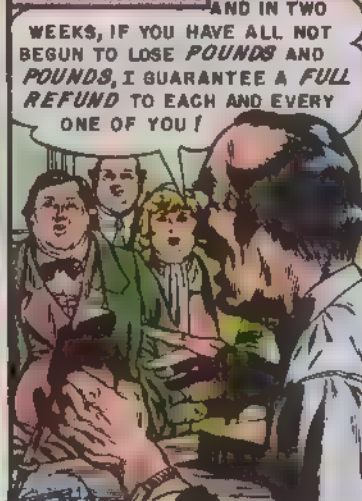


MRS. VAN KLEGE IS FIRST IN LINE THE NEXT MORNING WHEN DR. PERDO OPENS THE DOOR TO HIS 'CLINIC'! BEHIND HER ARE TOM AIKINS, SALLY BATES, AND CHARLIE STREET...



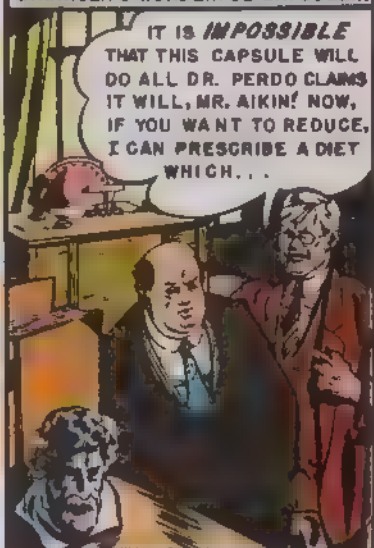
COME IN! COME IN, LADIES AND GENTLEMEN!

YES, THE FEE IS HIGH! TWO HUNDRED DOLLARS FOR ONE LITTLE CAPSULE! BUT, IF IT IS ALL THAT DOCTOR PERDO CLAIMS IT TO BE, IT'LL BE WORTH IT!



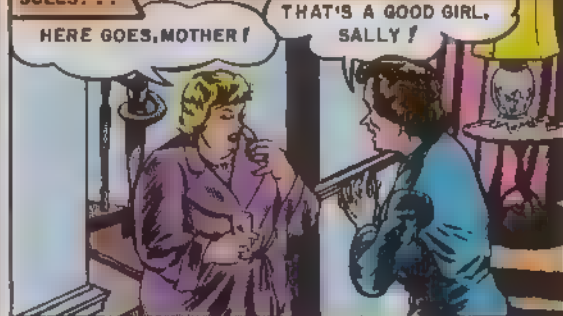
AND IN TWO WEEKS, IF YOU HAVE ALL NOT BEGUN TO LOSE *POUNDS* AND *POUNDS*, I GUARANTEE A *FULL REFUND* TO EACH AND EVERY ONE OF YOU!

ONLY OLD DOG DOUGHERTY, THE TOWN DOCTOR, IS DUBIOUS OF THE STRANGER'S WONDERFUL CAPSULE...



IT IS *IMPOSSIBLE* THAT THIS CAPSULE WILL DO ALL DR. PERDO CLAIMS IT WILL, MR. AIKIN! NOW, IF YOU WANT TO REDUCE, I CAN PRESCRIBE A DIET WHICH...

BUT DOC DOUGHERTY IS IGNORED! THE FOUR NICE FAT PEOPLE EACH TAKE ONE OF DOCTOR PERDO'S CAPSULES...



HERE GOES, MOTHER!

THAT'S A GOOD GIRL, SALLY!

IN A FEW WEEKS, THE PEOPLE WHO HAVE PAID DR. PERDO HIS FABULOUS FEE BEGIN TO LOSE WEIGHT...



JUST LOOK AT MR. STREET! HE LOOKS TWENTY POUNDS SLIMMER ALREADY!

AND IN A MONTH, THE NICE FAT PEOPLE WHO HAVE TAKEN DR. PERDO'S CAPSULES ARE NICE SLIM PEOPLE...



CAN I TAKE YOU TO THE SOPHOMORE DANCE SATURDAY NIGHT, SALLY?

I'D LOVE TO GO, IRVING!

SO THAT WHEN DOCTOR PERDO CLOSES HIS 'CLINIC' AND BIDS GOOD-BYE TO THE NICE SMALL TOWN, THERE ARE FOUR GRATEFUL THIN PEOPLE TO SEE HIM OFF...



GOOD-BYE, DOCTOR PERDO!

THANKS FOR EVERYTHING, DOC!

GOOD-BYE! DOCTOR! I'LL NEVER FORGET YOU FOR THIS!

BUT A FEW WEEKS AFTER DR. PERDO HAS GONE, THE NICE THIN PEOPLE WHO TOOK HIS AMAZING CAPSULE HAVE BECOME *THINNER* PEOPLE...

SALLY! YOU MUST EAT MORE! YOU'RE GETTING SKINNY AS A RAIL!

I EAT ALL I CAN, MOTHER! I... I'M FRIGHTENED!



...AND STILL THINNER...

REALLY, MRS. VAN KLEGE! THIS IS GETTING RIDICULOUS! I'VE TAKEN IN THIS DRESS THREE TIMES ALREADY!

I... CAN'T HELP IT, PIERRE! I CAN'T SEEM TO STOP!



...UNTIL...

WHY DON'T YOU GO SEE OLD DOC DOUGHERTY, TOM? HE'LL TELL YOU WHY YOU'RE DOWN TO NINETY POUNDS!

I CAN'T, LEENA! HE WARNED ME! I'D BE... EMBARRASSED!

THEN, ONE DAY...

COME QUICK, DOCTOR! IT'S MY ROOMER, CHARLIE STREET! HE'S DYING!



BUT WHEN OLD DOC DOUGHERTY ARRIVES...

YOU'RE TOO LATE, DOCTOR! HE... HE'S DEAD!

GOOD HEAVENS! HE'S ALL EMACIATED! THIN AS A BONE! HE LOOKS LIKE HE STARVED TO DEATH!



HE AIN'T GOT NO FAMILY, DOCTOR!

I'LL CALL THE CITY MORGUE! I HAVE TO PERFORM AN AUTOPSY TO DETERMINE THE CAUSE OF DEATH!



AT THE MORGUE, DOC DOUGHERTY TAKES A SCALPEL AND...

GOOD LORD!



STRAIGHT TO MRS. VAN KLEGE'S PALATIAL HOME, THE OLD DOG HURRIES! THERE ISN'T A MOMENT TO LOSE...

MRS. VAN KLEGE? I MUST SEE HER...

MRS. VAN KLEGE IS DEAD!



THE DOCTOR ARRIVES AT SALLY BATES' HOUSE JUST AS SALLY PASSES INTO THE BEYOND! TOM AIKIN IS DEADLY ILL WHEN DOG DOUGHERTY ARRIVES! HE ADMINISTERS DRUGS... BUT...

I'M TOO LATE! I CAN'T SAVE HIM, NOW!

SOB... SOB... MY POOR TOM! HE... SOB... JUST... JUST WASTED AWAY!



THEN THE DOG RUSHES TO JUDGE FARLAND'S HOUSE...

WHAT'S WRONG, DOG? YOU'RE WHITE AS A GHOST!

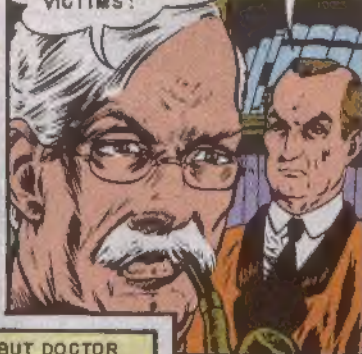
YOU'VE GOT TO SWEAR OUT A WARRANT FOR THIS INHUMAN DOCTOR PERDO! HE... HE'S MURDERED FOUR PEOPLE!



THE WARRANT IS SWORN AND THE SEARCH FOR PERDO BEGINS...

I THINK IT WOULD BE WISE IF THE INFORMATION AS TO THE CAUSES OF DEATH BE WITHHELD FROM THE FAMILIES OF THE VICTIMS!

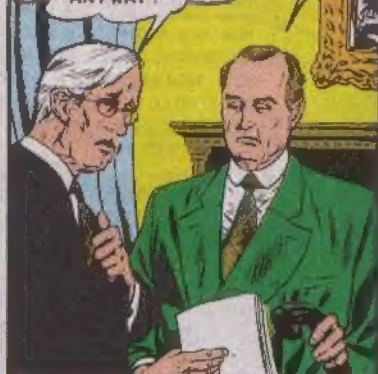
YES! THAT WOULD BE ADVISABLE UNDER THE CIRCUMSTANCES!



WEEKS GO BY, BUT THE TREACHEROUS DOCTOR IS NOT FOUND...

I SIGNED THE DEATH CERTIFICATE WITHOUT AUTOPSY ON MRS. VAN KLEGE SINCE I KNEW WHAT I WOULD FIND, ANYWAY!

THAT'S ALL RIGHT, DOG!



THE WEEKS STRETCH INTO MONTHS, BUT DOCTOR PERDO ELUDES HIS PURSUERS! THEN, ONE DAY... ABOUT SIX MONTHS AFTER HIS FOUR VICTIMS HAD DIED... DOCTOR PERDO, SPORTING A MOUSTACHE AS A DISGUISE, IS DRIVING ALONG A COUNTRY ROAD...

HMMM! I'D BETTER TAKE A DETOUR! I MIGHT BE RECOGNIZED!



THEY SAY A CRIMINAL ALWAYS RETURNS TO THE SCENE OF THE CRIME! PERDO SEEMS TO BE NO EXCEPTION! HE TAKES A BACK ROUTE, SKIRTING THE EDGE OF TOWN...

UGH! THE TOWN CEMETERY! LET'S SEE! I SOLD FOUR CAPSULES IN THIS BERG! THAT MEANS I GOT FOUR CUSTOMERS BURIED BEHIND THAT IRON GATE!



SUDDENLY THE ENGINE SPUTTERS! DOCTOR PERDO LOOKS DOWN! THE GAUGE REGISTERS EMPTY! HIS CAR JUST HAS ENOUGH POWER TO COAST INTO A NEARBY GAS STATION...

I'LL KEEP MY FACE HIDDEN! THIS HICK WON'T RECOGNIZE ME!

YES, SIR? GAS?



YES! FILL IT UP!

RIGHT!



SUDDENLY THE GAS-STATION ATTENDANT TURNS! THAT VOICE HAS A FAMILIAR RING! HE PEERS INTO THE CAR... FLASHLIGHT IN HAND... SHINING FULL INTO THE MURDERING DOCTOR'S FACE...

PERDO! IT'S YOU!!

NO! NO!



PERDO LEAPS FROM THE CAR! HE RUSHES DOWN THE ROAD! THE GAS-STATION ATTENDANT SPRINGS TO A PHONE... YEAH! IT'S

HIM ALL RIGHT! I'D KNOW HIM ANYWHERE! CALL OUT A POSSE! HE'S HEADED SOUTH ON THE POST ROAD! FOR MY DAUGHTER, SALLY... AND THE REST... GET HIM!



MEANWHILE, PERDO IS RACING BLINDLY DOWN THE ROAD! PAST AN IRON FENCE, HE PANTS...

THE... CEMETERY! I... COULD HIDE THERE! THEY'D... THEY'D NEVER THINK OF... LOOKING FOR ME... IN... THERE!



THROUGH AN OPENING IN THE RUSTED BARS... UP AMONG GREY TOMBSTONES AND GRASSY MOUNDS... HE RUNS...



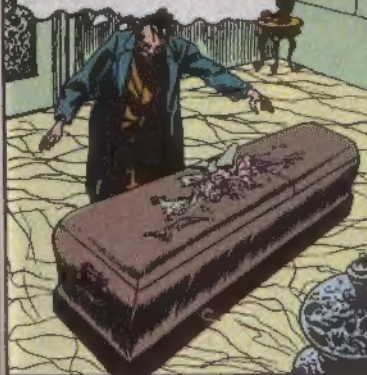
...INTO A MAUSOLEUM.

I CAN HIDE IN HERE...



PERDO... IN HIS TERROR... NEVER NOTICES THE NAME OVER THE DOOR... VAN KLEGE...

THE DOOR CLICKS BEHIND HIM! HE STANDS BESIDE A COFFIN REPOSING GROTESQUELY IN THE CENTER OF THE COLD STONE ROOM! SUDDENLY, HE HEARS A NOISE... A RUSTLING SOUND... COMING FROM THE CASKET!



PERDO UNLATCHES THE CATCH THAT HAS HELD THE CASKET CLOSED FOR SIX MONTHS! HE LIFTS THE LID...

OH, MY... GOD... NO...



OUTSIDE THE MAUSOLEUM, THE POSSE... WITH BLOODHOUNDS HOT ON PERDO'S SCENT... ARE STARTLED BY A BLOOD-CURDLING, EAR-SPLITTING SHRIEK...

E-E-E-E-Y-A-A-A-H!



THEY RUSH TO THE STONE VAULT... SWING OPEN THE DOOR...

GOOD LORD!

KILL IT... QUICK!

WHAT IN HEAVEN IS IT?



A HUGE WORM-LIKE MONSTER THRASHES ABOUT IN THE DARK MAUSOLEUM! THEN, THE THRASHING IS STILL, AS COUNTLESS BULLETS PLOW INTO ITS HIDEOUS HULK...

WHERE'S PERDO?

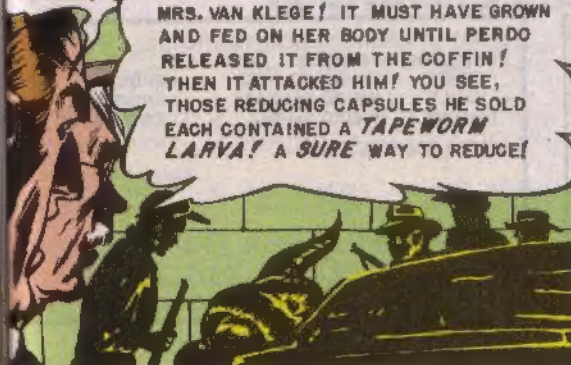
LOOK! HIS SHOE... WITH PART OF A FOOT IN IT! THE THING! IT MUST HAVE... DEVoured HIM...



THROUGH THE MILLING POSSE, OLD DOC DOUGHERTY AND JUDGE FARLAND PUSH THEIR WAY! THEY GAZE IN HORROR AS THE REVOLTING SIGHT...

WHAT IS IT, DOC?

A TAPEWORM! A MONSTEROUS TAPEWORM! THE ONE THAT KILLED MRS. VAN KLEGE! IT MUST HAVE GROWN AND FED ON HER BODY UNTIL PERDO RELEASED IT FROM THE COFFIN! THEN IT ATTACKED HIM! YOU SEE, THOSE REDUCING CAPSULES HE SOLD EACH CONTAINED A TAPEWORM LARVA! A SURE WAY TO REDUCE!



HEE, HEE! AND THAT'S MY STORY FROM THE CAULDRON FOR THIS TIME, YOU HORROR HUNGRY HIDIOTS! PERDO GAVE HIS VICTIMS A TAPEWORM TO SWALLOW...

AND FINALLY ONE SWALLOWED HIM! I HOPE YOU ENJOYED THIS TASTY TALE! DON'T FEEL SORRY FOR THE FOUR NICE PEOPLE WHO DIED FROM PERDO'S FIENDISH PLOT! IN THE END...

THE WORM TURNED... ON HIM! HEE, HEE! OH, BY THE WAY! IF YOU WANT TO LOSE WEIGHT, DON'T GO TO A QUACK LIKE PERDO! JUST KEEP READING E.C. HORROR MAGS! YOU'LL SHIVER THE FAT OFF! BYE, NOW!

